

VIRGINIA WILDLIFE

DECEMBER 2008

FOUR DOLLARS





Bob Duncan

Executive Director

As we close out the year and make plans for the coming winter, I join many of you who are taking a break to get outdoors and reflect in the quiet of the moment. We are, indeed, living in tumultuous times. The economic situation has many of us scratching our heads, thinking about how we spend and invest our hard-earned dollars. We appreciate the need for smart decisions; yet, some days the options appear elusive.

To my way of thinking, the concept of smart investing is broad and reaches beyond financial measures. It should include those things that "pay us back" by improving the quality of our days and the quality of the time we spend with family and friends. My mind naturally turns to thoughts of work and to the notion that our Department offers, among a suite of products, one that exemplifies a smart investment.

Our lifetime hunting license has always been, and continues to be, a very wise investment. It represents a financial commitment that gives back many times over and well beyond the initial cash

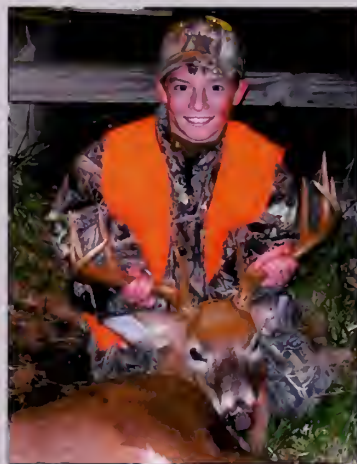


outlay. Each use, or "withdrawal," of the license reaps a positive, lingering reward.

I was reminded of its value when I met with Billy Stoneman, a bright and caring 12 year old whose dad, Wilmer, made just such an investment several years back. Billy went on his first hunt in 2003 at the age of seven. Three years later, he harvested his first *antlered* buck—a 10-pointer!—on opening day. Since then, Billy has enjoyed many hours deer

hunting with his father. He has also volunteered during a disabled hunt with the Virginia Waterfowlers' Association. Billy is learning a lot about life, about giving back, and about his priorities through spending time in the woods. And the lifetime license his father gave him will continue to pay huge dividends.

My hope is that you, too, will consider the rewards of a lifetime hunting license. Whether you choose the option or not, please make time for reflection in your favorite outdoors venue during this season of generosity and hope. Enjoy a safe and happy holiday.



Mission Statement

To manage Virginia's wildlife and inland fish to maintain optimum populations of all species to serve the needs of the Commonwealth; To provide opportunity for all to enjoy wildlife, inland fish, boating and related outdoor recreation and to work diligently to safeguard the rights of the people to hunt, fish and harvest game as provided for in the Constitution of Virginia; To promote safety for persons and property in connection with boating, hunting and fishing; To provide educational outreach programs and materials that foster an awareness of and appreciation for Virginia's fish and wildlife resources, their habitats, and hunting, fishing, and boating opportunities.

Dedicated to the Conservation of Virginia's Wildlife and Natural Resources

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Timothy M. Kaine, Governor

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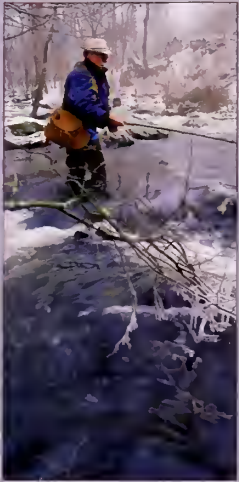
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DECEMBER CONTENTS



About the cover:

Looking for a way to cure a bad case of cabin fever? Why not visit a Department-stocked trout stream like Big Tumbling Creek in the Clinch Mountain WMA? During summer, this beautiful stream is managed as a spe-

cial fee fishing area. After fishing season, it reverts to a put-and-take designated stream, where a trout license is required instead of a daily permit. For more information, visit www.HuntFishVA.com, or call (434) 525-FISH. And don't forget, a hunting or fishing license makes the perfect holiday gift that gives all year long. ©Dwight Dyke



4 The Never-Ending Season by Curtis Badger

Step back in time to the decoy carving style of yesteryear.

9 Accessing the Hunt by Ken Perrotte

Making the hunting experience accessible to all.

12 Primum Non Nocere by Bruce Lemmert

All Virginians will benefit by adhering to this principle.

16 A Better Place Because of Blake by Tee Clarkson

A tribute to young Blake Wayland.

18 Community Partnerships by Gail Brown

Partnering outside the schoolyard builds strong student leaders.

20 Be Wild! Live Wild! Grow Wild! by Spike Knuth

Virginia's Diving Ducks.

25 Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries Financial Summary, Fiscal Year 2008

Afield and Aflour

29 Journal

- A Duck Hunter's Journal (33)

32 Photo Tips

Presents, Presents, Presents for the Holidays

35 2008 Index

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THE NEVER-ENDING SEASON

*For Grayson Chesser
carving decoys extends the
hunting experience.*

story and photos
by Curtis Badger

For most waterfowl hunters, the season ends on a cold day in January when all the hunting gear is packed away and forgotten until the following fall. But for Grayson Chesser, the closing of waterfowl season doesn't mean the hunting experience has come to an end; it just means it's changing.

Grayson is a hunting guide and decoy maker who lives in Accomack County on the Eastern Shore, and when the last of his clients leave, when the blinds are shut down for the year, he switches roles from

hunter to carver. Some of the decoys he makes will be hunted over, but most will be grabbed up by collectors who will display them in their homes and offices. To some, Grayson is a hunting guide who makes decoys, but to a growing number of people, Grayson is a folk artist who happens to hunt. They buy his decoys with no intention of using them in a duck blind.

It makes no difference to Grayson. Each decoy is carved and painted as if it will see action in a duck blind, but if someone wants to display one on the mantel, that's fine

with him. At about \$350 per decoy, it would be a bit pricey to have your own rig of handmade birds. Of course, you could book a trip with Grayson and hunt over his handmade rig.

"The rig is the important thing," Grayson says. "Anybody can carve a decoy. You want to create a community of birds, a group of individuals, just as they are in nature." Grayson makes sleeping decoys, feeding decoys, a few in an alert pose, some with their neck extended as if they were chasing another. He has a rig of teal for early season hunts, a rig of black ducks for





Grayson Chesser believes in creating a community of birds, like they appear in nature.



As revealed in these side and top views, Chesser's carving style is one of minimalism.

shallow salt marsh ponds, sea duck decoys for open water, and a brant rig for shallow bays, all hand-carved from materials ranging from cedar to cork to styrofoam crab pot floats.

Grayson continues, "The most satisfying aspect of hunting is to make your own rig of decoys, put them out on the water on opening day, and have ducks decoy to your rig. It's very rewarding. Decoys are not that difficult to make, and carving

your own extends the hunting experience. Most of us enjoy preparing for the hunt, and carving can be a big part of that."

Like the earlier generation of decoy makers he learned from, Grayson carves his birds in a minimalist fashion. There is little carved feather detail. Instead, Grayson uses painting techniques such as wet-on-wet blending, scratch painting, combing, and dry brushing to suggest feather detail. The idea is not to actually carve or paint feathers, but to create the illusion of feathers, much the way detail is rendered in impressionist paintings.

"The older generation of carvers knew how to capture the essence of a bird with a minimum of detail," he says. "They spent a lot of time in the marshes. If they weren't hunting they were gathering oysters or clams, or fishing. They knew birds, they saw them every day, and they didn't have to carve each feather to make the bird look real."



Grayson and his wife, Dawn, operate Holden Creek Gun Club near the community of Jenkins Bridge, not far from the Saxis Wildlife Management Area in northern Accomack. Their farmhouse has been in Grayson's family for generations, and many years ago they converted the old barn to a hunting lodge, put in a kitchen with all the amenities, furnished it with antiques, and began taking in visiting sportsmen. Most visitors consider Grayson an artist who works in wood, but Dawn is an artist who



Chesser uses a variety of brushes and tools to create detail and embellish his carving style.

works with local foods. Both are regulars at the Smithsonian Folk Life Festival in Washington each July, where Grayson demonstrates carving techniques and Dawn discusses regional cooking.

Grayson didn't start out to be an artist. Growing up on the Eastern Shore, he loved being on the water, especially in fall when the waterfowl began to arrive. An early interest in duck hunting led to an interest in decoys, and that led to an informal apprenticeship as a teen with well-known Chincoteague carver Miles Hancock, who made simple wooden decoys that captured a duck with just a minimum of detail.

So Grayson began making his own decoys to hunt with, using the old time methods of a previous generation of carvers, but adding his own style and technique. After high school he attended Old Dominion University, worked on the family farm, did a stint as a Virginia Game Warden (now called Conservation Police Officers), and all the while carved rigs of wooden decoys that he would hunt with during the fall season.





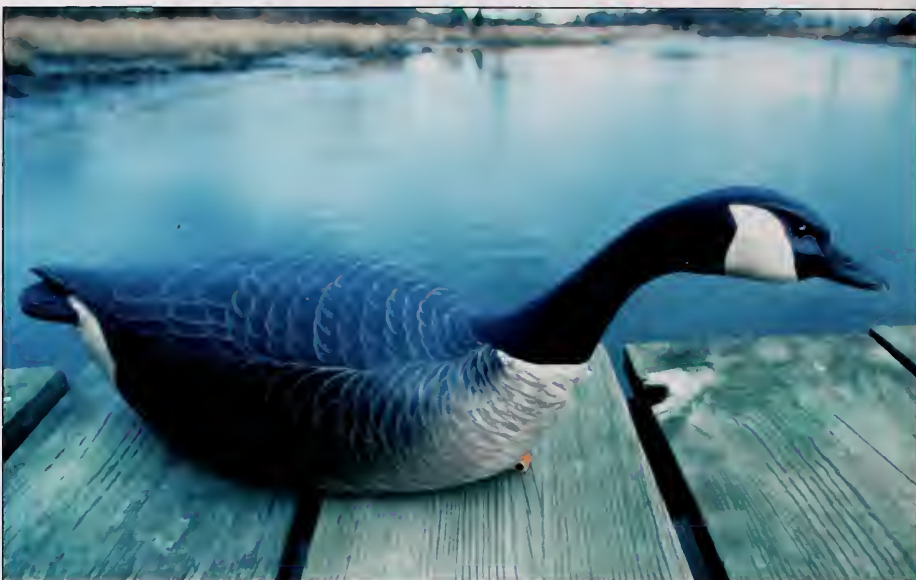
Making Decoys the Century Old Way



In 1989 Grayson Chesser and Curtis Badger collaborated on a book, titled *Making Decoys the Century Old Way*. The book sold out after going through two printings and was out of print for several years, becoming something of a collector's item. A new, revised and expanded edition was released last year by Tidewater Publishers, with the assistance of the Virginia Foundation for the Humanities. In the book, Grayson provides step-by-step instructions on how to carve, paint, and use your own decoys. Books are available through your local bookseller or from Tidewater Publishers in Centreville, Maryland. Call 800-638-7641 to order.



When Grayson began guiding visiting hunters, many of them wanted to purchase the decoys they hunted over, so Grayson would spend the off-season making new decoys to replace the ones purchased by guests. Within a few years Holden Creek Gun Club had become a growing family business. Dawn became closely involved and several local people were hired to help with guiding, cooking, and housekeeping duties. The farm fields were converted from grain production to conservation reserve. Grayson was showing his work at wildlife art shows along the East Coast, and he found an eager market for his decoys, not just among hunters, but among people who appreciate handmade, functional items



This decoy, with neck extended, closely mimics real-life behavior.



A rig of decoys and artist Grayson Chesser, who creates them (right).

He works in an old farm building adjacent to the hunting lodge. It is a two-room shop. The carving room has a band saw, a drill press, a big woodworking bench, and a floor littered with aromatic cedar shavings. The painting room has a well-worn easy chair for the artist-in-residence, chairs for visitors, a television, and shelves filled with decoys in various states of finish. Photographs of hunts from the past fill the walls.

Visiting Grayson and Dawn at Holden Creek Gun Club is a bit like stepping back in time, to an era when hunting lodges dotted the Virginia coast, when seasons were long and bag limits were generous. But those days are gone and will likely never be seen again.

"I've never considered duck hunting simply a matter of killing birds," says Grayson. "It always has been a more complicated process than that. It begins with knowing the birds, where they live and what their habits are. And the decoys are a large part of it. There is a great deal of satisfaction in making a lifelike decoy, in creating a decoy rig. The excitement of duck hunting to me comes from watching the sun rise over my own rig, then seeing birds on the horizon and watching them lock in on the decoys. It's one of the most rewarding hunting experiences you can have." □

Curtis Badger, whose most recent book is A Natural History of Quiet Waters (UVA Press), has written widely about natural history and wildlife art. He lives on Virginia's Eastern Shore.

that reflect the skill and artistry of the maker.

Grayson recently marked his sixtieth birthday, and his hair and beard have a bit more salt than pepper these days. He was elected to the Accomack County Board of Supervisors last year, so some of his carving time is now being spent doing county business. He has cut back on wildlife art shows, but he has enough orders for bird carvings that his shop stays busy.



Accessing the Hunt

*The Hogue Tract is a
place where permanently
disabled hunters
can enjoy
the thrill of the hunt.*

by Ken Perrotte

Light rain was falling in the October pre-dawn of Fauquier County. Richard Mast held a rain jacket over the head of his father-in-law, Tom Reese, as he searched through a document holder.

Reese had just maneuvered from the cockpit of his specially configured van onto a motorized scooter. When the van's side door slid open, a hydraulic lift carefully lowered man and machine to the ground.

Beyond grabbing his coffee and crossbow, one important piece of business remained before Reese could begin rolling through the dark toward a hoped-for encounter with a white-tailed deer. He needed to find the vehicle permit that would tell law enforcement personnel that this van with handicap-designated license plates at the C.F. Phelps Wildlife Management Area's Hogue Tract was, indeed, supposed to be there that day.

Mission accomplished, the permit was placed on the dashboard and Reese and Mast made their way along a winding trail toward a ground blind at the back of the 110-acre tract of land.

The Hogue Tract is one of only a few in Virginia reserved exclusively for permanently disabled hunters, and 50-year-old Warrenton resident Reese has been hunting there since it opened in 1997.

Reese, who injured his legs in a motorcycle accident in 1984, is classified as a T4 paraplegic, which means, he explained, a spinal injury from about his shirt pocket down.

"Can't feel it; can't move it," he said.



©Ken Perrotte

Prior to his injury, Reese had been a dispatcher with the Fauquier County Sheriff's Department, as well as a physician's assistant with the jail.

He spoke with fondness of both the land and the opportunity, counting himself as one of the people who were in on the ground floor of the property's transformation from private farm and forest land to public resource. Reese worked with Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries (DGIF) biologists and technicians to help design a system of trails and ground blinds tailored to service disabled hunters.

"When it was proposed, Jerry Sims called to ask if I'd be willing to come down and help with the design," Reese explained. Working alongside a team of DGIF staff—including regional manager Sims—Reese offered his thoughts on the stands, the trails, and what would work for him.

"We tried to imagine other types of disabilities other than our own personal one to try to make it work for different individuals," Reese continued.

"I had friends who knew this area, and they knew it had the habitat for game. It was just a matter of mak-

ing a way to get people into it," he said.

Hunting has logistical requirements. Disabled hunters face unique challenges in just getting to and from hunting locations, not to mention dealing with any game once it's taken. Assistance is often critical.

Reese said the Hogue Tract was intended to offer hunting access to people who were disabled to the extent they were unable to walk and needed a helper.

"But, one of the things we asked for in the design was the opportunity to allow the helper to also hunt. There are some places that won't do that,

and there are some disabled hunters who have to bribe folks to come with them. The ability for the assist hunters to hunt as well is just an extra 'feather in the cap' for this place," he explained.

Fortunately for Reese, his son-in-law regularly offers to accompany him to the field, whether or not he is allowed to tote a firearm or bow.

Reese said he thinks DGIF is doing a "first-rate" job managing the property and keeping hunting stands and paths in shape.

"They clear small trees, limbs, and brush to clear shooting lanes. They stack up dead brush against the



©Ken Perrotte

The Hogue Tract is unique in that it allows both the hunter (right) and his assistant to hunt.

blinds to increase the natural cover. Between the DGIF staff and area boy scouts and others who help maintain the property, they do a great job," said Reese.

He praised the Department's staff for clearing leaves from the paths a couple of times each autumn. While a seemingly small service, it is one that can be invaluable to hunters in manual wheelchairs.

"If you can't see the sides of the path, it's easy to get off the path and get into difficulty—especially in the dark when many hunters are approaching or leaving a stand," noted Reese.

"I know they'd love to pave this trail, but you know what funds are

like. Until then, this does work," he added.

The work hasn't gone without notice from local governing officials.

The Fauquier County Disability Services Board's Disability Awards Committee traveled to DGIF headquarters in Richmond last year to present a plaque commemorating the Hogue Tract's 10th anniversary. That recognition was followed up with one by the Fauquier County Board of Supervisors, which issued a proclamation commending efforts to assist the disabled residents of the county.

Reese said local law enforcement personnel are protective of the disabled hunters and work to ensure regulations prohibiting non-hunter

access during the seasons are strictly followed. The tract does afford access to the Rappahannock River. Signs articulating the type of access allowed are prominent.

"One of the more common problems, they [law enforcement officials] tell me, is youths going back in there to party. Other conflicts come when joggers with dogs just don't read the sign out front explaining that the area is off-limits during specific days during hunting season," Reese said, adding that he's never had any confrontations when speaking to people who should not be on the property.

While Reese has now taken a few deer from the tract, it took him nearly seven years to score the first.

"I wasn't able to get down here as much as I wanted to. But after I was able to get hold of an electric scooter, that changed my world and I could get down here a lot. The blinds are much easier to get to when you don't have to be pushed to them," he said. □

Ken Perrotte is a King George County resident and the outdoors columnist for the Fredericksburg Free Lance-Star newspaper.

Editor's note: For more information about the Hogue Tract, including how to schedule it for hunting, please contact Jerry Sims, Wildlife Regional Manager, Fredericksburg Regional Office, 540-899-4169.

Both the ground blinds and the paths were designed to accommodate the needs of disabled hunters.



©Ken Perrotte



©Ken Perrotte

*In nature's infinite
book of secrecy
A little I can read.*

Shakespeare

by Bruce A. Lemmert

I'm not sure who coined the term "dirt cheap," but this I do know. Whoever came up with that phrase surely hasn't purchased property in Virginia recently. Land is widely recognized as a cherished commodity. Our society measures so much in mere dollars and cents. So be it. But land is precious, in so many more ways than money can define.

A thinking person will accept the fact that the land is every bit as complex as the human body. And those familiar with the Hippocratic oath may recognize the title of this essay. "First, do no harm" is considered by many the cornerstone of the oath a physician takes upon entering the medical profession. This principle can be equally effective when applied to the land.

At one time, the typical Virginia landowner both lived on and worked the land. In order to be a good steward, Thomas Jefferson himself experi-



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PRIMUM NO

First, do no harm. The land ethic.



©Bill Lea



©Gregory J. Peis



©Maslowski Photo

All wildlife benefit from sound land management.

mented with such soil-saving techniques as crop rotation and contour plowing. And while Jefferson's idea of an agrarian society has been largely displaced, his concern for the land will never be legitimately trumped.

Virginia landowners now come from every walk of life and their land objectives can vary widely. But they share important common ground. This, my experience tells me. One: Most landowners want to be good neighbors. Two: There is no greater

legacy than land and most people, when they leave this good earth, want their legacy to be better than when they first arrived. The desires to be a good neighbor and to leave this world a better place are basic human values that I believe are imbedded in our souls.

Maybe you rent a two-room apartment in downtown Richmond and you are thinking, *I don't really have a dog in this hunt*. Well, my answer to that is, "You most certainly

do." As a citizen, each of us has a direct stake in millions of acres of public land. It is not just our right to insist on proper management of that land; it is our obligation. The land legacy we leave will resonate through time. Our land is a treasure that future generations will increasingly value.

Knowing that I am a lawman, you will probably be appalled that I recommend you defy the law. No, I couldn't recommend that you ignore the statutes that keep our society humming along on a somewhat even keel. As a landowner, the law I want you to resist is another kind of law: the law of gravity.

But Gravity Happens

The Appalachian Mountains were formed during the collision of continental plates about 270 million years ago. In its infancy, the Appalachians rivaled the present-day Rocky Mountains in height. The Rockies support several peaks over 14,000 feet. Contrast that with Mount Mitchell in nearby North Carolina, which, as the highest point in the Appalachian chain, reaches 6,684 feet. Our own Mount Rogers in the Virginia Highlands measures in at a mere 5,729 feet.

NOCERE



©Maslowski Photo



©John R. Ford

What happened? Gravity happened.

And something else called water happened. Water is the elixir of life. We simply cannot do without it. We drink it, we bathe in it, we recreate in it. But, when water combines with gravity in the wrong place, at the wrong time, in quantities we would term "too much," erosion results.

To my way of thinking, if landowners can manage only one thing on their land to be good neighbors, and for posterity sake, it would be this simple act: prevent erosion.

Jerry Claiborne, one of my former football coaches, had the acronym "KISS" framed on his office wall: "Keep It Simple, Stupid." Applied in this case, the objective is to prevent erosion by resisting the law of gravity. Since water facilitated by gravity accelerates erosion in a big, big way, some might suggest that we simply eliminate water from the formula. But we have already acknowledged that water, in the right amount, in the right place, is our lifeblood. Elimination of water is not an option. What about gravity? No, although we have a good time trying to defy gravity, we know, in the end, it can't really be done.

What's left? The land.

It's Not Just Dirt

Nature, left to its own devices, does an exceptional job of stabilizing the land. It is the diversity of life that holds this good earth together. All life vies for its place in the sun. Every niche in nature is exploited; even root zones are exploited by different flora. Plant life controls animal life. Plant-eating fauna make a living from the interest capital provided by plants. When plant eaters become too many, they may eat into principal, and this exposes the land to the ravages of gravity.

Meat eaters are provided to prevent this from happening. It may sound cruel to say that the meat eaters are devouring the vegetarians for their own good, but that is essentially what is occurring. Unlimited quantities of life are simply not permitted at any given point in time. This rule applies to all living things, *in toto*. In the big picture, then, these relationships promote diversity, and diversity protects and even enhances the soil.

The diversity offered by nature leaves the land a healthy place for each succeeding generation of life. This is called stability. And this is just what is going on above ground.



Keeping cows out of creeks will help protect water health all the way downstream.

What about below? University of Illinois biologist James Nardi says that a square meter of healthy soil supports "10 trillion bacteria, 10 billion protozoa, 5 million nematodes, 100,000 mites, 50,000 springtails, 10,000 rotifers and tardigrades, 5,000 insects and arachnids, 3,000 worms, and 100 snails and slugs." Those figures seem a bit high to me, but you get the picture. This is not just dirt.



Obligation and Reward

Land ownership entails both obligation and reward. The obligation of proper land management reaps a practical bonus—water that is filtered and purified. Water, slowed to gravity's pull, seeps into the soil and then to the great aquifers. Downstream flooding is mitigated. Water runoff remains pure. Too much runoff too fast, however, carries silt, which degrades your neighbor's stream and robs you and your legatee of a most precious resource: soil. Appropriate land management, then, satisfies the "good neighbor policy" and legacy. Those looking for win-win situations find it in the land ethic.

Rewards of land ownership can come through the mere observance of such things as woodlots, wildflowers, and wildlife. In my mind's eye, the notion of "the land" is all-encompassing. It includes the weather, the season, even the time of day. These influences, which many consider outside the realm of property ownership, are still very much part and parcel of the land. The ever-present stream of such intangibles affects the character and patina of the landscape and changes our perceptions of it from season to season, from day to

day, and even from minute to minute. The true value of this inclusive viewpoint is, well, priceless. If one has the time and can open their senses to these gifts that the land provides, one's mortality will be enhanced.

It is, indeed, a complex world. The young lady who lives in the two-room flat in downtown Richmond may have very limited chances to directly enjoy wide open spaces. That's life. It makes her opportunities on the land all the more valuable. In her urban setting one finds enhanced appreciation of that flower, of that unmistakable call of the house wren in spring, of that cumulonimbus cloud in summer. It is not just immediate satisfaction, but appreciation deepened by a memory of association. Her view is expanded by her very experience.



My family physician is a good-natured guy. He said that he not only didn't mind sharing the Hippocratic oath with landowners, he thought that it was a good idea to do so. After all, we come from the land and we will return to the land. Personal health and land health are, in fact, inextricably entwined.

Remember, you are a steward.



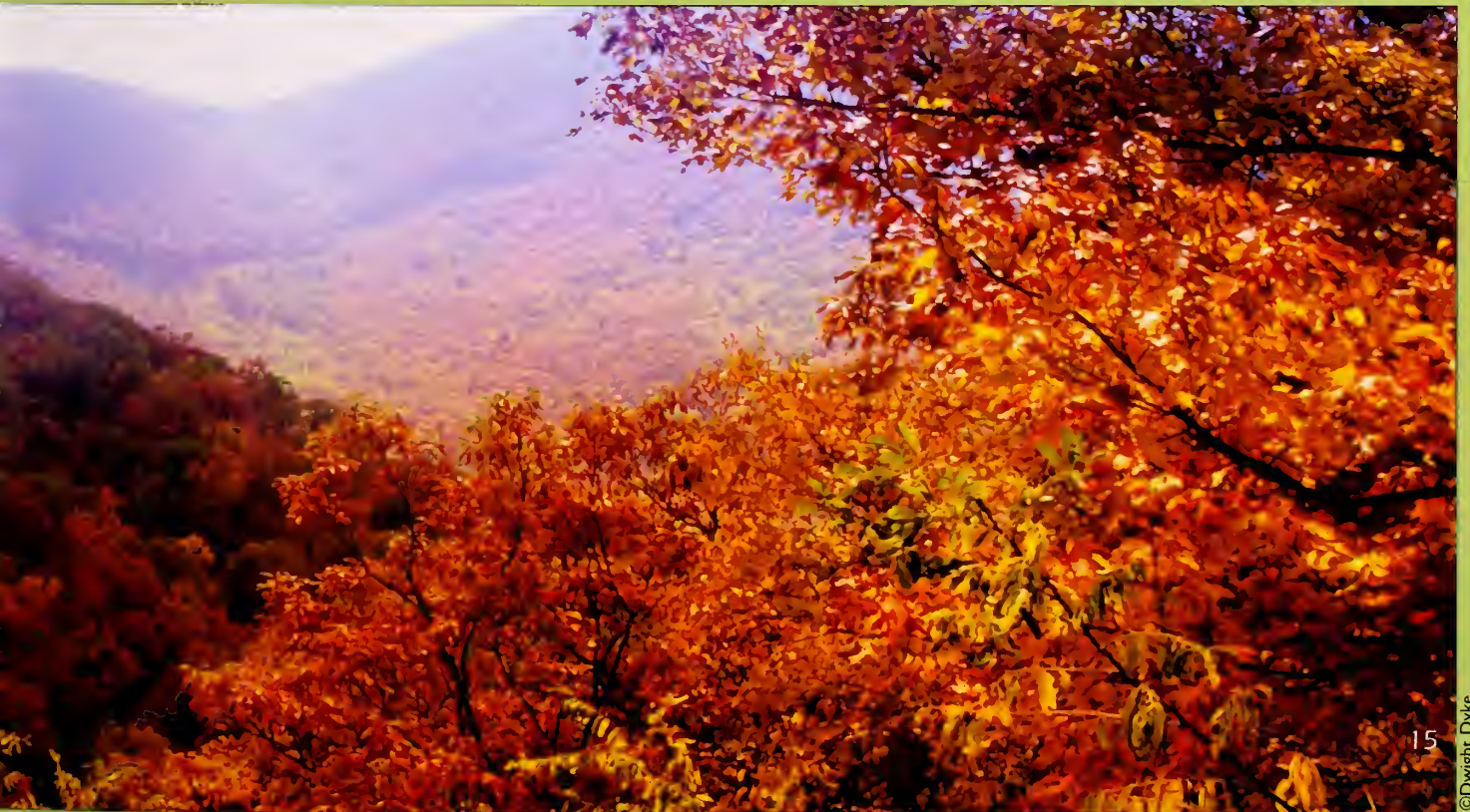
©Dwight Dyke

Bank erosion is caused by many things, including cows that are not fenced out.

Be a good neighbor. Keep all the pieces. Defy gravity. Leave a legacy.

"Primum non nocere." First, do no harm. □

Bruce Lemmert is a Conservation Police Officer with the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries and a member of the Virginia Chapter of The Wildlife Society and the Virginia Outdoor Writers Association.



A Better Place

by Tee Clarkson



Blake Wayland
photos courtesy of the Wayland Family

Throughout his writings, Thoreau preached the importance of the individual, stating, "For it matters not how small the beginning may seem to be: What is once well done is done forever." He recognized that it did not always take grand accomplishments or elaborate gestures to make the world a better place, that compassion and caring and the coming together of people is often enough to effect change.

On August 23, 2004, doctors diagnosed Blake Wayland with Acute Myeloid Leukemia. He was ten years old at the time. His situation was terminal and as a last wish, Blake, a big outdoorsman, wanted to go hunting in Montana. The Wayland family approached the Make A Wish Foundation, who was unable to honor his request. Fortunately, Captain Bobby Mawyer at the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries found out about Blake's situation and took it upon himself to make Blake's wish a reality. While hunting in Montana would not work for various reasons, he contacted some friends at a large, private farm in eastern Henrico County and was able to gain access to take Blake hunting over the course of the 2004-2005 season.

"Blake didn't care too much about shooting something," said Captain Mawyer, "He just liked being outdoors."

The two struck up quite a friendship over the five or six times they went hunting together. While they spent hours in a ground blind, often

Because of Blake

they just shot target practice with a .22 rifle or Capt. Mawyer let Blake drive the four-wheeler around the farm. "We did whatever he wanted to do," Mawyer said. When Blake lost his battle with Leukemia in March 2005, shortly after the hunting season, Mawyer was a pall bearer at his funeral.

Brian Wayland, Blake's father, joined Mawyer and Blake on several

hunts. "We never did get anything when I was with them," Blake's father recalled, "but he would say, we'll get 'em next time dad, and in his mind there was going to be a next time, which is all that matters. He loved to fish and hunt and it meant the world to me to see him so happy at the end."

Several years later, Blake's grandfather, the late Bob Wayland, saw a notice in the newspaper for the DGIF's volunteer work force. He immediately called to see what he could do to help. Over the past year, he spent time volunteering with the "Complementary Work Force" in the Verona office.

"If I could help pay back some of what Bobby did for Blake, I would. That's why I got involved with the program, to repay their kindness," Bob told me.

While Blake's story is a tragic one, his life was not. Blake's courage and kindness affected all those who came in contact with him. Through generosity, Blake spent his last months doing what he loved: enjoying the outdoors. More than a few people took time from their lives with no expectation of gain for themselves, only to reaffirm that the greatest rewards have no monetary value. The world became a better place for it. The world became a better place because of Blake Wayland. □



Bob Wayland

To learn more about the Complementary Work Force, visit our Web site at: www.HuntFishVA.com/volunteer.

Tee Clarkson is an English teacher at Deep Run High School in Henrico County. Tee is also a member of the Virginia Outdoor Writers Association.



Blake and his dad, Brian.

When schools and communities work together, everyone is a winner.

story and photos by Gail Brown

If you're lucky, you might get a "what's-that-thing" this year. You know, one of those loosely wrapped, lumpy, clay offerings that, like valued friendships, become holiday keepers. Long after little fingers toss glitzy wrappings aside, both remain to warm our homes and boost our spirits. Friendships are also important at Chesterfield County's Bettie Woodson Weaver Elementary School (Bettie Weaver). "Friends share...I share my crayons," says Claire, a first grader at Bettie Weaver. "I share with everyone at my table."

Like Claire, the teachers and staff at Virginia Naturally (VAN) schools understand the value of friendship. One of the hallmarks of VAN schools is their ability to establish long-lasting partnerships with local environmental agencies—agencies whose roles include "sharing" and helping schools build environmental science programs. The sharing doesn't end with the holiday season, either, although asking for a pond does seem a bit like whispering in Santa's ear.

Yet it's a pond that tops the wish list at Hanover County's Stonewall Jackson Middle School and adjacent Lee-Davis High School. Both schools are landlocked, with no access to a natural waterway for scientific investigation and environmental studies. There is, however, a small plot of land between the schools that both science departments agree would be the perfect location to build a pond. But even researching the feasibility of this project would not be possible without the support and expertise of their long-time friend and partner, the Hanover-Caroline Soil and Water Conservation District. Teacher Lynn Shope



Community Part



Top: Mrs. Bettie Weaver encourages children to connect with nature. **Above:** A 9th-year VAN school, Crestwood partnered with Friends of Chesterfield's Riverfront.



Partnerships

Forming partnerships and learning about environmental issues doesn't need to wait until high school. At Bettie Weaver, students continue to benefit from an outdoor classroom they helped plant with the county's local environmental organization, Friends of Chesterfield's Riverfront (Friends). PTA mom Jenny Childress sees numerous opportunities for leadership skills to bloom as the students work on new stewardship goals. Friends partnered with Crestwood Elementary, too, providing teacher training and helping both schools with their water monitoring projects.

As December fades and the new year unfolds, VAN schools will form new partnerships, but wisely keep old friends close and in sight—like that cheerful red and green “shape” so prominently displayed in the family room, the one that older siblings point to and grouse, “What is that thing, anyway?” □

Gail Brown is a retired principal for Chesterfield County Public Schools. She is a lifelong learner and educator, and her teaching and administrative experiences in grades K-12 have taught her that project-based environmental programs teach science standards, promote core values, and provide exciting educational experiences for the entire community.

states, “There’s so much that goes into building a pond...we could never attempt this alone. We have accomplished so much over the years with the help of our soil and water district, and we have a much better chance to see this wish become a reality because of this partnership.”

Partnerships help in other ways, too. According to Clover Hill High School’s science teacher, Michelle Huber, their partnership with Chesterfield County’s Department of Environmental Engineering benefits both her students and her program. “My students enjoyed working with an expert during field studies...and working with data from the county.” She believes this partnership will help her students “develop a greater understanding of their responsibilities as future leaders and help them make sound decisions and ask the right questions about environmental issues.”



Bettie Weaver’s PTA supports their recycling efforts. Fifth graders weigh and record the amount of recycled paper.



Top: Strong partnerships with their PTAs resulted in signage for Bettie Weaver’s butterfly garden and a greenhouse with gardens for Crestwood students. Above: Even the principal gardens at Crestwood!

Virginia's I



Canvasback

story and illustrations
by Spike Knuth

Looking at the two types of ducks in Virginia, some basic physical differences govern where and the way they live. Diving ducks normally inhabit deeper, larger bodies of fresh or brackish water and are capable of diving for their food of bottom vegetation, mussels, or crustaceans. The legs and feet of diving ducks are located toward the rear of their bodies. On dry ground they stand at about a 45-degree angle, rather than parallel, and they have some difficulty walking on land.

Divers fly faster and even appear swifter due to shorter, chunkier bodies, narrower and smaller wings, and quicker wing beats. To become airborne they must run over the water to pick up speed and have larger feet to help them do so. They generally fly in larger flocks and habitually flock in large groups or rafts in open water.

Diving ducks are less colorful and show a lot of blacks, grays, browns, and whites. Most colors are on the drake's heads, and they do not have the colorful speculums of puddle ducks. Most divers nest over or very close to water. Diving ducks

breed mainly in the north and in the prairie pothole region of Canada and the United States. Many divers winter in Virginia or pass through the Commonwealth on their way further south.

Canvasback
(*Aythya valisineria*)

This big duck was known as the "king of ducks" by the old market hunters, and its flesh was highly prized as a food source in those days.

"Cans," as they are nicknamed, have a distinctive, broad-based bill which slopes up into an elongated, streamlined head. The head and neck of the drake is a deep reddish-brown with black around the face and over its crown. Its chest and rear end are black; its belly and back, white and finely vermiculated with gray—resembling canvas! The female is basically brownish with a darker breast, gray back and belly, and a whitish face and chin.

Cans are at home on big marshes or rafting up on large lakes, bays, or rivers. Their favorite food is wild celery (*Vallisneria americana*) which is where the scientific name of the canvasback is derived. Canvasback also feed on varied aquatic plants

and will turn to small clams and other shellfish when plant foods are not available.

Many canvasbacks migrate southeasterly from Central Canada to winter in the Chesapeake Bay. Flocks in migration fly in long way lines, sometimes containing hundreds of birds.

Redhead
(*Aythya americana*)

The redhead is large and long-bodied, with a noticeably puffy head. The male is black-breasted with gray back, lighter gray belly, and reddish-brown head. The female



Redhead

iving Ducks

Be Wild! Live Wild! Grow Wild!

basically brownish with a pale brown head and white chin. Both sexes show gray speculums on their wings, and their bills are tipped with black and a narrow ring of white.

Most redheads breed in the prairie marshes and parklands of Canada and the marshes of the north central states. Some females may not build a nest, but dump their eggs in other ducks' nests. Redheads migrate south beginning about mid-October, with many birds going southeasterly to the Chesapeake Bay. The redhead's diet is normally aquatic vegetation. Look for them on brackish waters, large marshes, or freshwater lakes.

Greater Scaup

(*Aythya marila*)

Lesser Scaup

(*Aythya affinis*)

There are two types of scaup that winter in Virginia: the greater and the lesser. The greater is normally larger, but interbreeding results in size variations. The lesser has a dark head that shines purplish in the sun but is sometimes mixed with green, while the greater's head shines green. Both appear black in the absence of reflecting sunlight. They have white bellies, black breasts and rear ends, and grayish flanks and backs. The greater scaups show whiter on back and belly.

The females of both species are basically dark brown with white face patches. The bills of both are bluish or bluish-gray. They have white speculums. The white extends into the primaries of the greater scaup, appearing as a stripe in flight. On the lesser



Greater Scaup

scaup, only the secondaries are white, which is the best way to tell the two species apart. The greater scaup also has a wider bill than the lesser scaup. Other names include bluebill, broadbill, and blackhead.

Scaups are restless ducks that fly low over the water when moving

from one spot to another. They gather in large rafts on their wintering grounds. On migration they fly high in swarm-like flocks. Their food is primarily a variety of aquatic plants, such as widgeon grass or wild celery, as well as small mollusks and crustaceans.



Lesser Scaup



The drake has a dark, puffy-looking head, with a sort of top-knot and a purplish cast. Its sides are gray and it has a vertical white hash mark just behind its black chest. The hen is basically brown with a pale brown face, whitish chin, and distinctive white eye ring.

These ducks breed mainly in the parklands of Canada—an area just north of the prairie marshes, where small trees and forest land begin. You'll often see them in close association with hooded mergansers, usually in small groups.

Common Goldeneye (*Bucephala clangula*)

One of the hardiest of our wintering waterfowl is the American goldeneye, forced south only when the waters freeze up north. It is a medium-sized, stocky duck. The male has a puffy, velvety blackish-green head with a large white spot between the eye and bill. In flight it flashes a lot of black and white with its wings and its immaculate white underbody. Its feet are a bright yellow-orange. The hen is a more brownish-gray and gray above, with white undersides and a gray chest band, which gives the appearance of a white neck collar. Its head is puffy as well, but rich brown in color.

One of its common names is "whistle wings," because its wings make a whistling sound. Chesapeake Bay hunters locally call them "jinglers." They feed on seed clams, small mussels, freshwater shellfish,

Ring-necked Duck (*Aythya collaris*)

The ring-necked duck is a diving duck with an affinity for swampy-edged marsh sloughs or ponds and cypress-studded, shallow lakes (rather than the broad, open water areas diving ducks usually inhabit). Its name comes from a ring or collar of light brown around the male's neck—which is actually not very visible. More visible is a white ring around the tip of its bill, which results in another common name, "ring bill." Other localized names are "black jack" and "marsh bluebill."



Ring-necked Duck



Common Goldeneye

and some aquatic plants. Goldeneyes are seldom seen in large flocks; usually in pairs, or trios.

Look for them on mostly fresh and brackish waters of tidal rivers, lakes, and large reservoirs. Come February they begin moving north to their breeding areas in Canada, where they nest in tree cavities around lakes and rivers.

Bufflehead

(*Bucephala albeola*)

The bufflehead was originally known as the "buffalo head," because of its unusually shaped, puffy head. Time and slurred words resulted in a shortened version, "buffle-head."

It is a short, stubby duck with a big head and small bill. The male has a dark head set on a mostly white body. The head is glossed with pur-

ple, violet, and green, with a triangular-shaped white patch behind its eye at the back of its head. Its undersides are white with gray-edged flanks and a dark greenish-black back. It has pink feet. The hen is also dark-backed and white-bellied, with gray sides and breast and a white cheek patch on a brownish-gray head. At a distance on the water, the bufflehead can be confused with the hooded merganser—which also has a white patch visible when it fans its crest.

It nests primarily in parklands or bush country north and west of the

prairies of Canada in tree cavities, much like the wood duck, often in old woodpecker holes. They are fast fliers, traveling low over the water in small flocks made up of mostly females and juveniles, along with a couple of older drakes.

The bufflehead gets very fat in late fall, which earned it the tag, "butterball." It is not ranked high as a table bird because of its shellfish diet,



Bufflehead

but those birds that feed heavily on vegetation can be quite delectable. Buffleheads can be found on ponds, lakes, reservoirs large and small, and on most tidal rivers during the winter.

Ruddy Duck (*Oxyura jamaicensis*)

One of the most unique and unusual of our waterfowl is the ruddy duck. Its names include "stiff-tailed duck," "bumblebee coot," "dummy duck," "sleepy head," and "leatherback." They were valued by market hunters as acceptable substitutes to canvasbacks in terms of food value, because ruddys were mainly vegetarians, which imparted to them a very good flavor.

Add to that the fact that they were fairly easy to bag due to their tendency to swim or drift sleepily into a hunter's decoy set within easy shotgun range. A market hunter could fit many more of these chunky ducks into his boat, and they would fetch a buck a piece in the market, resulting in the nickname, "dollar duck."

The male ruddy has two distinct plumages. Its spring breeding plumage sports a body of chestnut red, with a black mask and crown, white cheeks, and a sky-blue bill. In fall it turns to a dark grayish-brown on its back and lightly barred flanks with a rusty wash. It retains its whitish cheeks. The female is similar year round but has a mark on its

cheek that resembles an "S" lying on its side.

The female lays eggs larger than ducks three times her size, yet weighs only $\frac{3}{4}$ to $1\frac{1}{4}$ pounds! The ruddy drake, unlike the drakes of other species, remains to help care for and protect the young. Look for ruddys from late October through early February in coastal marshes, some inland lakes, and tidal rivers.

Spike Knuth is an avid naturalist and wildlife artist. For over 30 years his artwork and writing have appeared in Virginia Wildlife. Spike is also a member of the Virginia Outdoor Writers Association.



Common Goldeneye

Be Wild! Live Wild! Grow Wild! is a regular feature that highlights Virginia's Wildlife Action Plan, which is designed to unite natural resources agencies, sportsmen and women, conservationists and citizens in a common vision for the conservation of the Commonwealth's wildlife and habitats in which they live. To learn more or to become involved with this new program visit: bewildvirginia.org.



Ruddy Duck

VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF GAME & INLAND FISHERIES



Financial Summary Fiscal Year 2008

(July 1, 2007 - June 30, 2008)

Mission Statement

To manage Virginia's wildlife and inland fish to maintain optimum populations of all species to serve the needs of the Commonwealth; To provide opportunity for all to enjoy wildlife, inland fish, boating and related outdoor recreation and to work diligently to safeguard the rights of the people to hunt, fish and harvest game as provided for in the Constitution of Virginia; To promote safety for persons and property in connection with boating, hunting and fishing; To provide educational outreach programs and materials that foster an awareness of and appreciation for Virginia's fish and wildlife resources, their habitats, and hunting, fishing, and boating opportunities.

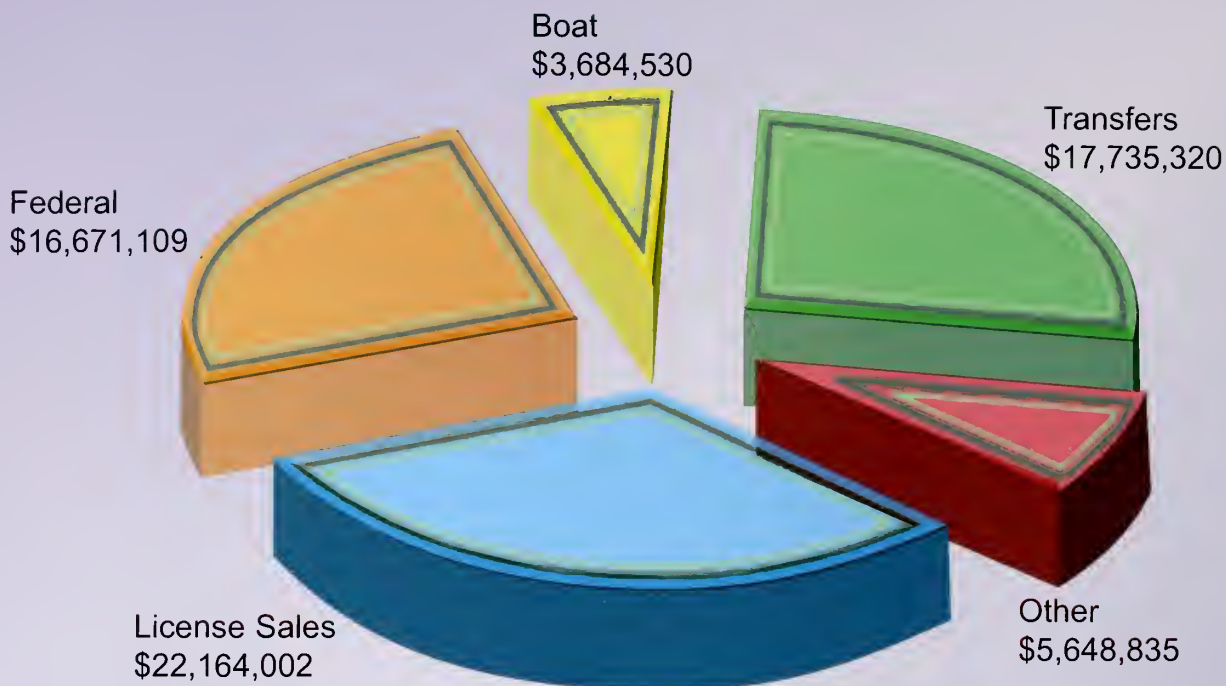


Dwight Dyke



Dwight Dyke

INCOME FOR FISCAL YEAR 2008



Total Net Cash Income: \$65,903,796

Distribution of Agency Revenue and Transfers for Operation by Source for FY 2008

License Sales: \$22,164,002

Key to our mission of providing wildlife-related recreation and management, the Department sells licenses required for participation in hunting, fishing, and trapping activities across Virginia. The Department currently sells approximately 60 types of annual licenses in addition to lifetime hunting and fishing licenses. Cash receipts from the sale of lifetime licenses are deposited into a separate lifetime license account that is not used to fund operations.

Boat Registration and Titling: \$3,684,530

The Department is responsible for

safe boating education, for registration and titling, and for the enforcement of boating laws in Virginia. Boating programs are funded by fees derived from boat registration and titling. These funds are deposited in a separate account within the Game Protection Fund.

Currently there are just over 250,000 registered boats in Virginia powered by some mechanical means. Canoes, rowboats, kayaks, sailboats, and other non-powered vessels are not required to be registered unless powered by a motor.

Transfers: \$17,735,320

The Department receives cash transfers from the state's General Fund directed to the Game Protection

Fund. The cash represents collection of Watercraft Sales and Use Taxes and a portion of the sales tax on equipment for hunting, fishing, camping, wildlife watching, and other outdoor-related activities.

The specific amount transferred to the Department is often modified by language in the General Assembly budget bill. To determine the amount the General Assembly will transfer to the Department, review the budget bill category, "Miscellaneous; Inter-fund Transfers."

Other: \$5,648,835

Other income sources include *Virginia Wildlife* magazine subscriptions; receipts from wildlife conservation license plates; timber sales

Department Goals

- Provide for optimum populations and diversity of wildlife species and their habitats
- Enhance opportunities for the enjoyment of wildlife, inland fish, boating, and related outdoor recreation



Lee Walker



©Dwight Dyke



©Dwight Dyke

from Department-owned lands; interest from cash balances in accounts; sales of merchandise; donations; and sales of the state migratory waterfowl stamp.

Federal Aid: \$16,671,109

Federal funds come from a variety of designated funding sources, including:

The *Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration Act* (popularly known as the Pittman-Robertson Act) funds are derived from an 11 percent federal excise tax on sporting arms, ammunition, and archery equipment, and a 10 percent tax on handguns.

The *Federal Aid in Sport Fish Restoration Act* (commonly referred to as the Dingell-Johnson/Wallop-Breaux Act) dollars are derived from a federal excise tax on manufacturers of fishing tackle, duties on boats, and a motorboat fuels tax.

The *State and Tribal Wildlife Grant Program* funds are from appropriations provided through the federal budget bill and are not dedicated tax funds. The program supports states' efforts that benefit wildlife and their habitats, including species that are not hunted or fished. The amounts may vary according to the appropriation in the federal budget.

The *Recreational Boating Safety Grant Program* is administered through the U.S. Coast Guard. The sources of money for this program are varied and include a tax on fuel used in boating and the allocation of revenues collected through amendments to the Dingell-Johnson/Wallop-Breaux Act. The funds may be used to provide facilities, equipment, and supplies for boating safety education and for law enforcement. Acquisition, construction, and repair of public boating access sites used primarily by recreational boaters, in addition to a variety of other programs ranging from boating patrol, search and rescue, boating safety inspections and marine casualty investigations, navigation aids, and supporting boat registration and titling programs are funded through this program.

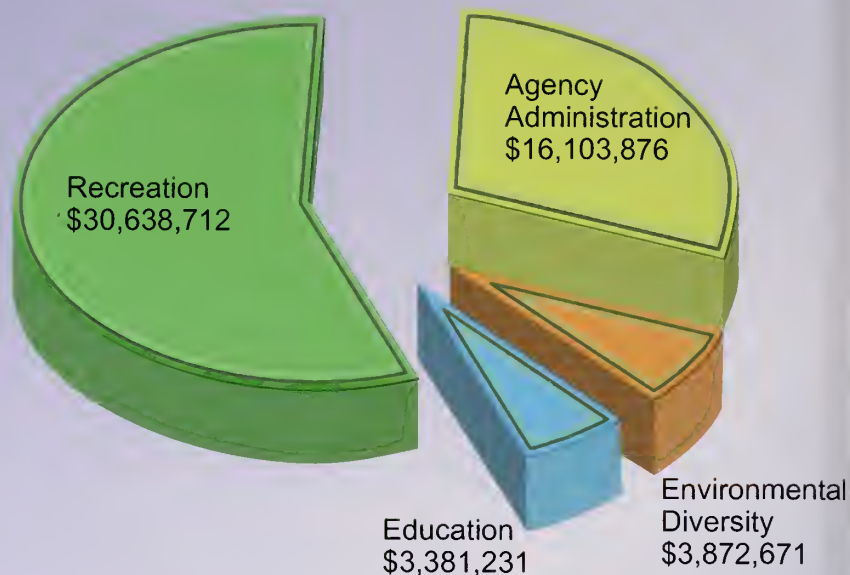
With the exception of the *Recreation Boating Safety Grant Program*, federal funds are primarily designated for wildlife and fisheries management and cannot be used for law enforcement efforts.

- Improve the understanding and appreciation of the importance of wildlife, inland fish, and their habitats
- Promote safe and ethical conduct in the enjoyment of boating, hunting, fishing, wildlife viewing, and related outdoor recreation
- Improve agency funding and other resources and effectively manage all resources and operations

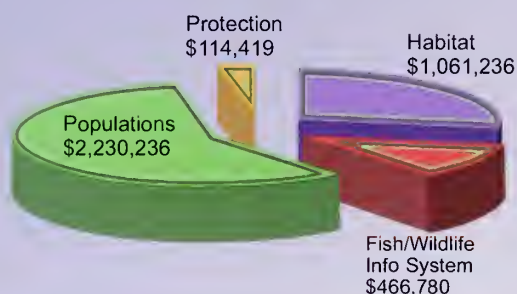
EXPENDITURES FOR FY 2008

Total Expenditures:
\$53,996,490

Since funding sources support a range of programs, the Department uses a mission-focused budget divided into four functional areas: Recreation, Education, Environmental Diversity, and Administration. Administration costs are shown here for information purposes. Such costs are allocated across the three core areas of our mission.



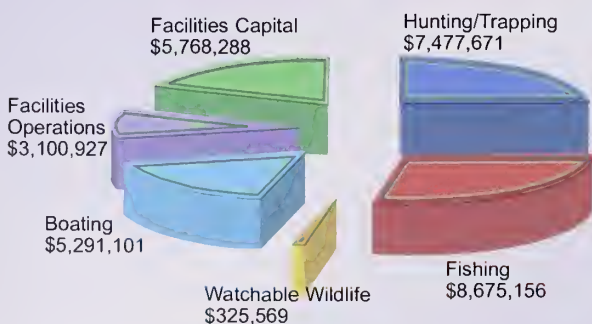
Environmental Diversity



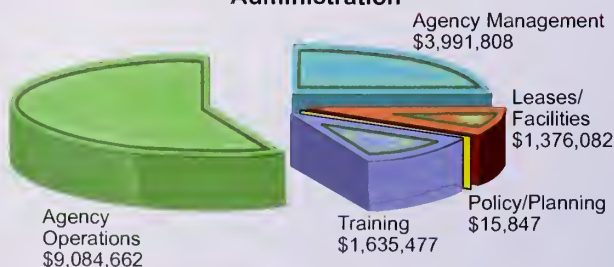
Wildlife & Boating-related Education



Wildlife & Boating-related Recreation



Administration



Mission-focused, Functional Areas

• The *Environmental Diversity functional area* is a set of programs designed to support the mission of the agency: "To manage Virginia's wildlife and inland fish to maintain optimum populations of all species to serve the needs of the Commonwealth." This is comprised of habitat and population management work done for game species such as deer, turkey and quail, and non-game species which includes birds and reptiles and endangered species.

• The *Education functional area* is a set of programs to support the mission of the agency: "To promote safety for persons and property in connection with boating, hunting and fishing." This includes boating education, outdoor education, and public outreach such as *Virginia Wildlife* magazine, Project WILD, and the Outdoor Report.

• The *Recreation functional area* is a set of programs to support the mission of the agency: "To provide opportunity for all to enjoy wildlife, inland fish, boating and related outdoor recreation." Efforts supported by this category include fish hatcheries, hunting, fishing, and wildlife watching programs.

• The *Administration functional area* is a set of programs to sup-

port the goal of the agency: "To improve agency funding and other resources and the management and effectiveness of all resources and operations." This area covers Department-wide administrative activities that ensure compliance with procurement, accounting, technology and other policies, and also includes acquisition and maintenance of facilities.

The administrative structure of the agency is divided into administration, enforcement, boating safety, wildlife, fish, wildlife diversity, and information and education. These administrative units are represented by a cost code structure within the financial systems of the agency. Within any functional area, all of the disciplines will apply their specific knowledge, skills, and abilities at an appropriate level to obtain the goals and objectives of the programs.

Department Assets

- More than 200,000 acres of land in 38 wildlife management areas
- 37 public fishing lakes
- 215 public boat facilities
- Handicapped-accessible fishing piers
- 8 fish culture stations
- Statewide birding and wildlife trail



2008-2009 Outdoor Calendar of Events

For current information and registration on workshops go to the "Upcoming Events" page on the Department's Web site at www.HuntFishVA.com or call 804-367-7800.

December 6: Educational Rabbit Hunting Workshop, Kennedy's Orchard, Bedford County.

December 6: Women's Pheasant Hunting Workshop, Remington. For more information contact Sharon Townley at 540-439-2683 or email shadygrovekennel@aol.com.

January 3, 2009: Youth Waterfowl Hunting Workshop, Chance, Va.

January 3, 2009: Firearms season closes for bear, deer and turkey. Late archery and late muzzleloading deer seasons close.

January 16-18, 2009: The Richmond Fishing Expo, Richmond Raceway Complex. For more information, see <http://www.ncboatshows.com/CurrentShows/>

January 31: Quail and squirrel seasons close.



by Beth Hester

Winter World: The Ingenuity of Animal Survival

Bernd Heinrich

2003 Ecco/Harper Collins

ISBN: 0-06-095737-9

Softcover with illustrations

\$14.95

"It seems astounding to us that some frogs can survive months being frozen, or that a bird as small as a kinglet can stay

warm and survive even one winter night, much less a whole northern winter."

- Bernd Heinrich

Basic survival techniques are generally a part of every outdoor person's repertoire. Most hunters, anglers, skiers and hikers know how to create rudimentary shelter, build a fire, and dress properly for cold, harsh conditions. We manage to get by, bundled up in wool, waxed-cotton or high-tech synthetics with nary a thought for how the grouse, the turtle, the vole, or the kinglets who are sharing the forest with us are getting along. However, when our breath comes out in icy, white puffs, and our fly line won't shoot through the guides, it's hard not to speculate about how whole hosts of other woodland creatures have evolved their own highly specialized 'winterizing' techniques.

Where do the animals go? What do they eat? Do they overwinter, or hibernate? Author and biologist Bernd Heinrich takes readers on an extended, jaw dropping tour of the inner world of animals as they cope with winter.

Some creatures survive by creating their own biological antifreeze; Ruffed grouse tunnel into snow to wait out a storm; the vole (Mother Nature's hors d'oeuvre) becomes the winter dietary staple of weasels, foxes, bobcats and other predators; wasps insulate their homes with layers of homemade papier-mâché; thousands of congregating snow fleas tint the snow almost black; and a grizzly can move up to a ton of earth to carve out a hillside den.

And speaking of bears, Heinrich also provides some surprising information about bear metabolism and their winter behavior...a surprise I won't spoil for you here.

If Heinrich's book consisted only of individual and group portraits of animal survival, that would be enough. The real heart of the book rests in the connections the flora and

fauna make with one another from late autumn to early spring. He shows us the interdependent and kaleidoscopic winter world in all its miraculous complexity; his prose style, a perfectly balanced blend of rock-hard science and lyricism. □

A Second Chance for Virginia's Bird Watchers: The 2009 Great Backyard Bird Count

If you'll miss this month's 2008 Christmas Bird Count, don't worry... the 2009 Great Backyard Bird Count (GBBC) is just around the corner. The annual, four-day event is organized by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and the National Audubon Society, with sponsorship from Wild Birds Unlimited. The 2009 count will take place over President's Day weekend, February 13-16.

Why bother to count birds? According to the Audubon society, the reasons are legion:

"Scientists and bird watchers can learn a lot by knowing where the birds are. Bird populations are dynamic; they are constantly in flux. No single scientist or team of scientists could hope to document the complex distribution and movements of so many species in such a short time. Scientists use the counts, along with observations from citizen-science projects such as the Christmas Bird Count, Feeder Watch, and ebird, to give us an immense picture of our winter birds. Each year that these data are collected makes them more meaningful and allows scientists to investigate far-reaching questions."

Participants in last year's GBBC submitted more than 85,000 checklists, surpassing the 2007 all-time record by several thousand. Participants also identified a record 634 species and sent in thousands of stunning bird images from around the

continent. In Virginia, a total of 179 species were reported, including the Virginia rail, bald eagle, osprey, merlin, harlequin duck, and horned lark. Virginia also had the distinction of ranking sixth among the top 10 states submitting the most bird count checklists!

Don't miss this opportunity to become a citizen-scientist, helping to track the birds of the Commonwealth. To find out how you can participate, view bird photos sent in by participants, and explore detailed state-by-state results of the annual counts, visit:

www.audubon.org/gbbc
www.birdsource.org/gbbc

Get involved; it's a simple, gratifying way to assist scientists in collecting valuable bird data. It's also a great occasion to celebrate Virginia's wildlife during the post-holiday season. ☐

Buy Your Lifetime License
1-866-721-6911

Report Wildlife Violations
1-800-237-5712

United States Postal Service

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Extent and Nature Of Circulation	Avg. No. Copies Each Issue During Preceding 12 Months	No. Copies of Single Issue Published Nearest to Filing Date
Total Number of Copies	40,417	36,000
Mailed Outside-County Paid Subscriptions Stated on PS Form 3541	34,738	32,876
Mailed In-County Paid Subscriptions Stated on PS Form 3541 None		None
Sales Through Dealers and Carriers, Street Vendors, Counter Sales, and Other Non-USPS Paid Distribution	25	25
Paid Distribution by Other Classes Through USPS	68	54
Total Paid Distribution	34,831	32,955
Free or Nominal Rate Outside-County Included on PS Form 3541	None	None
Free or Nominal Rate In-County Included on PS Form 3541	None	None
Free or Nominal Rate Copies Mailed at Other Classes Through USPS	None	None
Free or Nominal Rate Distribution Outside the Mail	1,085	1,085
Total Distribution	35,916	34,040
Copies Not Distributed	4,501	1,960
Total	40,417	36,000
Percent Paid and/or Requested Circulation	97%	97%

VIRGINIA WILDLIFE CALENDAR



It's once again time to purchase a new Virginia Wildlife calendar. For more than 20 years the Department of Game and Inland Fisheries has been publishing one of the most visually stunning and informative wildlife calendars in the country.

The 2009 edition of the Virginia Wildlife calendar highlights many of the most sought after game and fish species in the state. Virginia hunters, anglers, and wildlife enthusiasts will appreciate the rich colors and composition of the 12 monthly photo spreads.

The calendar is full of useful tidbits for the outdoors lover—including wildlife behavior, preferred fishing and hunting times, hunting seasons, state fish records, and much more! Life history information is provided for each species featured.

Virginia Wildlife calendars make great holiday gifts and are still being offered at the bargain price of only \$10 each.

Quantities are limited, so order yours now! Make your check payable to "Treasurer of Virginia" and send to: Virginia Wildlife Calendar, P.O. Box 11104, Richmond, Virginia 23230-1104. To pay by VISA or MasterCard, you can order the calendar online at: www.HuntFishVA.com on our secure site. Please allow 4 to 6 weeks for delivery.



Outdoor Kids

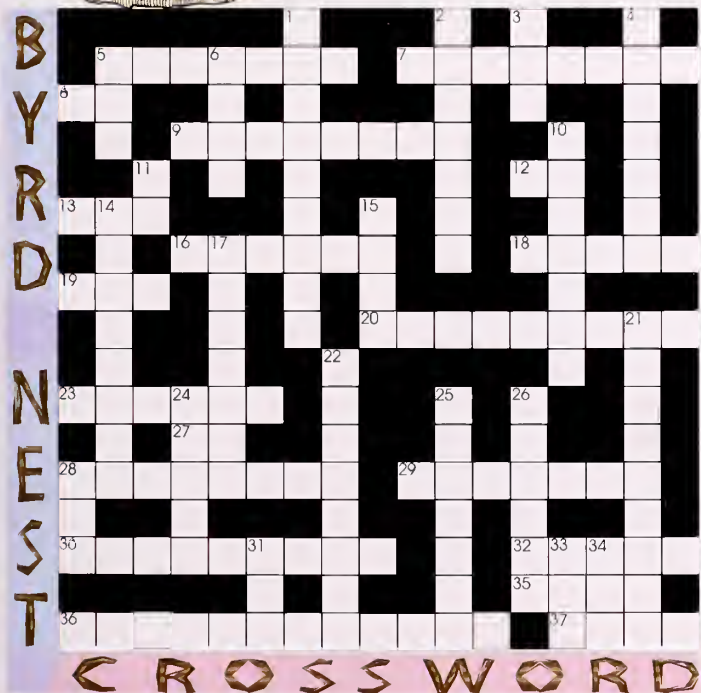


Congratulations to Ben Spencer (right), who took this fine gobbler during a youth turkey day hunt in 2007. The bird weighed 20 pounds and had a 10-inch beard. Ben was seven years old at the time and killed this turkey on his grandparents' farm in Lunenburg County. Ben is the son of Cal and Meri Page Spencer of Kenbridge, Virginia.



From the Editor:

Thanks to the many employees of the Department who volunteered their time and expertise to review articles during 2008. Your timely assistance helped to keep the magazine on track each month and is sincerely appreciated!



ACROSS

5. Seek game with arrows
7. Fledgling bird
8. Code for type of firearm
9. "Devil's Paintbrush"
12. Code for type of bullet
13. Spotlight on deer
16. Suck up liquid
18. Hatch, reproduce
19. Scrap, crumb
20. Oyster, clam, mussel
23. Great _____ Swamp
27. Moment _____ time
28. Wood warbler group
29. Orange and yellow _____; butterfly
30. Lower half of turtle shell, (pl.)
32. Snowy shore bird
35. Clapper (bird)
36. Yellowish brown to drab brown bats
37. Insect rough surfaces used in stridulation

DOWN

1. Root of plant used for venom treatment
2. Bushy thistle-like flower
3. Deer resting place
4. Small shad-like fish
5. Kill a deer
6. Boat toilet
10. Upward movement of air
11. Aside; beside
14. Marine mammal
15. Glossy bird
17. Float in liquid
21. Tree mammals
22. Area between hunter and animal
24. Fog, very fine rain (pl)
25. Soft laugh, cluck
26. Gossamer-wing family
28. Stretch of noisy, roaring river water
31. Urban rodent
33. Sportfish for bowfishing
34. Inlet

An excellent resource for solving this puzzle is the *National Audubon Society Field Guide to the Mid-Atlantic States*. (Answers in January, 2009 issue of the magazine)

Marika Byrd is a freelance writer and photographer and a member of the Virginia Outdoor Writers Association.

Photo Tips

by Lynda Richardson

Presents, Presents, Presents for the Holidays

I wish I could be more like my mom. Right after the holidays she is already buying gifts for the following year. In March, I might hear, "Oh boy, wait until Christmas! You are going to KILL me when you see what I got you!!!" When May arrives it might be, "Do you have a salad spinner? Don't buy one because I got you one for Christmas...or should I give it to you for your birthday?" All year long she gleefully reports on various gift purchases that she makes and stashes away.

One of the best gifts my mom gives us is something she makes by hand. This past July, in honor of my youngest sister's 40th birthday, mom knitted 40 mice in various colors and stuffed each one with catnip. I'm not really sure if this was a gift for my sister or her cats but it was quite entertaining to see them lick, smack around, and roll on those mice.

Mom has made felted pink flamingo purses with pink feathers, rainbow-colored hedgehogs, gorgeous quilts, throws and, among my favorites, pillowcases. Flamingos seem to be a favorite theme, and I got one of those. My husband got a New England Patriots pillowcase as well as several fish print ones. The more colorful, or as she says, "loud," the better! My mom is too funny.

So what are you going to come up with as a gift idea for your photography-loving family member or friend? How about making a gift?

If you are handy with a sewing machine or needle and thread, why don't you try making a pillowcase or two with appropriately-themed fabric? Pillowcases are actually super easy and inexpensive to make, and you can find loads of directions for making them on-line and at your favorite fabric store. Here's a link to directions that I found on-line: <http://sewing.about.com/gi/dynamic/offsite.htm?site=http://www.mor-monchic.com/crafty/pillowcases.asp>.

Here are some more examples of what you could do:

1. Picture frames! Buy or put together plain wooden frames and decorate them! I have cut out pictures and text from various magazines and then decoupaged them onto plain ash frames. Clear shellac will protect your



"Decorated frames and note cards make great gifts that you can put together yourself!"

©Lynda Richardson

hard work and give the frame a shiny, finished-off look. You could also use acrylic paints to paint the frames and/or cover them with shells, faux pearls, glass beads, or fabric. Be creative!

2. Note cards! Purchase blank 5X7" photographic note cards with envelopes that you can give your photographer to fill with their own 4X6" images, or you can do it for them. Two great places to get these cards are: Cape Cads (for blank cards) www.capecadsstore.com, (800) 662-1008; or for cards with messages, try Photographer's Edge, www.PhotographersEdge.com, (800) 550-9254.

3. Photo albums or journals! Buy or make a plain photo album or journal and decorate it with a particular theme your recipient would love! If your photographer traveled to Africa, maybe they would like an album decorated with African-themed beads, zebra striped fabric, or, of course, their own images. Study scrapbooking and collage-making magazines and books for additional ideas.

Give a gift that will be treasured for a lifetime! My mom would be proud of you! Happy Holidays! □

Image of the Month



Congratulations to Joseph R. Ellis of Sterling for his wonderful photograph of a Cooper's hawk feeding on an unlucky songbird. Joseph reports that he spotted the raptor hanging around his bird feeders. This apparently paid off for the clever bird of prey. Joseph captured this image with a Nikon D50 digital SLR camera with a 70-300mm lens at the focal length of 300mm at 1/60th, f.5.6, ISO 200.

You are invited to submit one to five of your best photographs to "Image of the Month," Virginia Wildlife Magazine, P.O. Box 11104, 4010 West Broad Street, Richmond, VA 23230-1104. Send original slides, super high-quality prints, or high-res 360 dpi jpeg files on disk and include a self-addressed, stamped envelope or other shipping method for return. Also, please include any pertinent information regarding how and where you captured the image and what camera and settings you used, along with your phone number. We look forward to seeing and sharing your work with the readers of Virginia Wildlife!

A Duck Hunter's Journal

by Tee Clarkson

December 15, 2007

Just like with anything else, sometimes duck hunters have those days when things don't work out the way they were planned. Back when I guided for pheasants in Nebraska we would say, "They were ziggin' and we were zaggin'" when the wily roosters found a way to escape a field without harm. Last December 15th was one of those days.

My father and I received an invitation to a duck club on the Pamunkey River. I had heard about the place for years, about limits of greenheads and geese, but had never gotten the opportunity to hunt there. Expectations were high as we pulled down the long driveway leading to the farmhouse along the river. From the woods to the left a calico deer bounded across the road and stopped momentarily in the bean field on the other side. I should have taken it as some sort of sign, but instead I just thought, "Cool!" Inside the small house that acts as the lodge, groups of hunters donned waders, drank coffee, and swapped stories. Some about hunting. Some not. It was still an hour before dawn.

A few minutes later it was time to draw for blinds. My father went first and pulled the #1 tag from the pot, which meant we had first choice of blinds for the morning's hunt. We chose a blind in the back of a creek where the club member who invited us had shot a limit of birds the last time he had been down. Now I was really fired up. This morning was sure to get me out of the slump I had been in for a few hunts.

At shooting time the birds were everywhere: black ducks, mallards, teal, and wood ducks. We passed on several groups of wood ducks and another of teal, expecting the circling mallards to drop into the spread at any minute. At some point, one would think I would learn my lesson. One's bag tends to get lighter when greed becomes part of this game. I know this, and I have been guilty on many occasions of letting the first few birds land in order to try to pull the bigger group in behind, only to have the pair take off unscathed and the larger group head for greener pastures before coming into range.

The big ducks kept circling and circling but none would commit to our spread. Finally, four black ducks peeled off and landed a few hundred yards down the creek. The rest followed. Over the next several hours over 200 birds landed behind us in the creek. It was clear they had been back there for a few days. They set up with wings locked from hundreds of yards out. I called at them for the first hour or so and then just put the call down and watched as they dropped, group after group, into the oasis behind us. Club rules don't allow any hunting outside of the blinds, so there was nothing to do but watch. I myself was momentarily inclined to paddle the boat up the creek with a handful of decoys, kill three quick limits, and head for breakfast.

In the end we came home without pulling the trigger. It was still great to see so many birds. And though it would have been even better to get in a little shooting, that's just the way it goes sometimes. Most times, actually.



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Previous Virginia resident and nonresident hunting license holders may not use an apprentice license.

To learn more about the Virginia Apprentice Hunting License, call (866) 721-6911 or log on to www.HuntFishVA.com.

Index to Virginia Wildlife

2008, Volume 69, Numbers 1-12

BE WILD! LIVE WILD! GROW WILD!

Brant, Geese, and Swans, <i>Knuth</i>	Feb., p. 12
Puddle Ducks, <i>Knuth</i>	Nov., p. 26
Ruffed Grouse, <i>Knuth</i>	Apr., p. 24
Small Winter Bird Friends, <i>Knuth</i>	Jan., p. 24
Those "Other" Sunfish, <i>Knuth</i>	July, p. 9
Virginia's Amazing Hawks, <i>Knuth</i>	Sept., p. 26
Virginia's Diving Ducks, <i>Knuth</i>	Dec., p. 20
Virginia's Flycatchers, <i>Knuth</i>	May, p. 14
Virginia's Little Flycatchers, <i>Knuth</i>	June, p. 24
Virginia's Plovers, <i>Knuth</i>	Oct., p. 26

BOATING SAFETY

Add a Fish-Depth Finder to Your Plastic Boat?, <i>Crosby</i>	Apr., p. 32
Boating in Cold Water, <i>Crosby</i>	Jan., p. 34
Drop Your Prop and Get a Jet!, <i>Crosby</i>	May, p. 33
Meet SPOT: A Satellite Messenger, <i>Crosby</i>	Aug., p. 34
New Law Addresses Boating Safety, <i>Guess</i>	Oct., p. 34
Power Your Boat With The Sun, <i>Crosby</i>	Sept., p. 33
Safety on the Water, <i>Sledd</i>	July, p. 33
What's Your Boat Trailer Worth?, <i>Crosby</i>	June, p. 33
Winter Float Planning!, <i>Crosby</i>	Feb., p. 32

FISH & FISHING

2007 Angler Hall of Fame	June, p. 28
2007 Angler of the Year	June, p. 30
Go West Young Man—Go Far West, <i>Ingram</i>	Jan., p. 19
Lake Conner's Lunker Largemouth, <i>McGlade</i>	Oct., p. 18
Lake Prince's Trifecta, <i>McGlade</i>	Nov., p. 12
Match the Hatch, <i>Murray</i>	Aug., p. 16
Nymph Fishing for Smallmouth Bass, <i>Murray</i>	July, p. 21
Opening Day is For Kids, <i>Clarkson</i>	Apr., p. 4
Project Healing Waters, <i>Montgomery</i>	May, p. 4
Riverkeeper® Rodeo Snags More Than Fish <i>Montgomery</i>	Sept., p. 24
Small Lake, Big Surprises, <i>McGlade</i>	Sept., p. 20
Spotsy's New Gem, <i>McGlade</i>	June, p. 4
The Art of Deception, <i>Clarkson</i>	Jan., p. 4
Tidewater's Non-tidal Gold Mines, <i>McGlade</i>	July, p. 4
Where The Sky is Always Blue, <i>Clarkson</i>	Aug., p. 4

HUNTING AND TRAPPING

A Duck Hunter's Journal, <i>Clarkson</i>	Nov./Dec., p. 33
A New Hunting Heritage, <i>Clarkson</i>	July, p. 26
Accessing the Hunt, <i>Perrotte</i>	Dec., p. 9
Above The Law?, <i>Shepherd</i>	Jan., p. 8
Avoiding Bowhunting Blunders and Bloopers, <i>Ingram</i>	Oct., p. 22
Cobble Hill Farm, <i>Kocka</i>	Sept., p. 14
Dove Hunts Celebrate Food, Family and Friends, <i>Perrotte</i>	Aug., p. 20
GRITS, <i>Jones</i>	Aug., p. 12
Hope's Harvest, <i>Johnson</i>	Oct., p. 14
Minimalist Hunting 101, <i>Ingram</i>	Apr., p. 14
Passing It On, <i>Hart</i>	Nov., p. 8
Radford Revisited, <i>Perrotte</i>	Sept., p. 9
Real Hunters Don't Bait or Feed, <i>Ingram</i>	Aug., p. 8
The Hunt is More Than The Harvest, <i>Shank</i>	Nov., p. 4
The Never-Ending Season, <i>Badger</i>	Dec., p. 4
Trapping 101, <i>Clarkson</i>	June, p. 9

MISCELLANEOUS

A Better Place Because of Blake, <i>Clarkson</i>	Dec., p. 16
A Central Virginia Museum Rocks, <i>Grey</i>	Aug., p. 25
A Green School Blooms with Life, <i>Brown</i>	Sept., p. 16
A Keelboat on the Rivanna River?, <i>Crosby</i>	July, p. 14
A Little Night Music, <i>Shepherd</i>	July, p. 17
Annual Photography Contest Showcase, <i>Richardson</i>	March
Camping With Kids, <i>McGlade</i>	Feb., p. 24
Community Partnerships, <i>Brown</i>	Dec., p. 18
Featherweight Fliers, <i>Majarov</i>	Oct., p. 9
Financial Summary, Fiscal Year 2008	Dec., p. 25
Floating the Rapp, <i>Ingram</i>	Sept., p. 4
Franklin's Blackwater Landing, <i>McGlade</i>	Apr., p. 9
Kids Against Trash, <i>Brown</i>	Jan., p. 12
Magic Happens at Wolftrap, <i>Brown</i>	May, p. 26
Mustang Meadows, <i>Brown</i>	Feb., p. 20
Outdoor Beach Women, <i>Streit</i>	Feb., p. 18
Retriever College, <i>Perrotte</i>	Jun., p. 20
Seeing is Believing, <i>Brown</i>	Nov., p. 22
Southside Virginia, <i>Mckinley</i>	Jan., p. 16
Using the Arts to Inspire Stewardship, <i>Brown</i>	Oct., p. 16
Virginia's Grand Caverns, <i>Byrd</i>	June, p. 15
Weaving an Environmental Tapestry, <i>Brown</i>	Apr., p. 20

PHOTO TIPS

Back Up Those Valuable Digital Photographs, <i>Richardson</i>	July, p. 34
Be a Wildlife Detective, <i>Richardson</i>	Jan., p. 32
Celebrate the Season With Holiday Light Photography, <i>Richardson</i>	Nov., p. 34
Create Your Own Favorite Shooting Location, <i>Richardson</i>	June, p. 34
Get Involved With the North American Nature Photography Association, <i>Richardson</i>	Sept., p. 34
Photograph Your Favorite Canine!, <i>Richardson</i>	Oct., p. 33
Presents, Presents, Presents for the Holidays, <i>Richardson</i>	Dec., p. 32
Spare Your Shoulders and Get a Beach Rolly! <i>Richardson</i>	Aug., p. 33
Tips for Creating Better Photographs—Part 1, <i>Richardson</i>	Apr., p. 33
Tips for Creating Better Photographs—Part 2, <i>Richardson</i>	May, p. 34
What is Acceptable Digital Manipulation? <i>Richardson</i>	Feb., p. 34

RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

"Bring Back Bob," <i>Clarkson</i>	Oct., p. 4
Clearing the Way to Rebuild Fisheries, <i>Weaver</i>	May, p. 20
Meadowood Doesn't Fence You In, <i>Byrd</i>	Feb., p. 8
Minnows and Mussels, <i>Ingram</i>	Feb., p. 4
Primus Non Nocere, <i>Lemmer</i>	Dec., p. 12
Protecting Our Wetlands, <i>Mckinley</i>	Apr., p. 18
Retaining a Geography of Hope, <i>Funk</i>	Nov., p. 16
Thinking Globally and Acting Locally, <i>Clarkson</i>	May, p. 24
Trout in the Classroom, <i>Beasley</i>	June, p. 12
Trucks for Trout, <i>Beasley</i>	Apr., p. 6
Virginia's Mystery Serpent, <i>Pinder</i>	May, p. 9

WILD FOOD PREPARATON

April is for Wild Turkey Gobblers, <i>Cone</i>	Apr., p. 34
Oysters at Risk, <i>Cone</i>	Feb., p. 33
Tasty Trout Tips for Better Cooking Results, <i>Cone</i>	Jan., p. 33

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